

recent actions set the other bookend to his Presidency—withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Consider that in his very first week in office, he signed an Executive order that sought to end CIA's interrogation and detention programs and to close Guantanamo within a year. The problem was that he didn't have a credible plan for what to do with the detainees afterward. He still doesn't.

That was one of the first things he did in office, and it parallels disconcertingly with one of the most recent things he has done in office: announcing the withdrawal of all of our combat forces from Afghanistan by the end of his term. I say that because once again he announced step A without thinking through the consequences of step B. He seems determined to pull out completely whether or not the Taliban is in a position to reestablish itself, whether or not Al Qaeda's leadership finds a more permissive environment in the tribal areas of Pakistan, and whether or not Al Qaeda has been driven from Afghanistan completely—one of our primary aims in this conflict from the beginning.

The two examples I mentioned serve as bookends to his Presidency, but between these two bookends much has been done that undermines our national security—for instance, the President's inability to see Russia and China for what they are: dissatisfied regional powers intent on increasing their respective spheres of influence.

The failed reset with Russia and the President's commitment to a world without nuclear weapons led him to hastily sign an arms treaty that did nothing to substantially reduce Russia's nuclear stockpile. What do we have to show for the reset? Moscow was undeterred in its assault on Ukraine, as everyone can plainly see, and Russia has repeatedly found ways to undermine our national objectives.

Then there is the President's strategic pivot to the Asia-Pacific—a plan he announced without any real plan to fund it, rendering the strategy largely hollow. We see examples of that almost daily, with China undeterred in its efforts to intimidate smaller nations over territorial disputes. Let's be clear. We cannot pivot forces to Asia that are still needed in places such as the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf, nor can we constrain China's ambitions without investing or developing the forces needed to do so. I fear that the failure to make the kinds of naval, air, and Marine Corps investments that are necessary could have tragic consequences down the road.

Of course, we have all seen how eager the President is to declare an end to the war on terrorism. The threat from Al Qaeda and other affiliated groups has now metastasized. The turmoil unleashed by uprisings in north Africa and the broader Middle East has resulted in additional ungoverned space in Syria, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen. We have seen prison breaks in Iraq, Paki-

stan, Libya, and the release of hundreds of prisoners in Egypt. Terrorists have also escaped from prisons in Yemen, a country that is no more ready to detain the terrorists at Guantanamo now than they were in 2009. And the flow of foreign fighters into Syria—which has fueled the growth of ISIL—suggests that the civil war there will last for the foreseeable future.

The dogged adherence to withdrawing our conventional strength and sticking to campaign promises has created a more dangerous world, not a stable one—as just one example, the President's failure to negotiate a status of forces agreement with Iraq. An agreement such as that would have allowed for the kind of residual military force that could have prevented the assault by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Now we see the consequences unfolding before our eyes, and it is incredibly worrying. President Obama's withdrawal-at-all-costs policy regarding Iraq has proved deeply harmful to U.S. interests, and it ignores the sacrifices made by our servicemembers—those who sacrificed life and limb fighting to keep America safe.

Several weeks ago the President spoke at West Point, and in that speech he vaguely described a new counterterrorism strategy and pledged to engage “partners to fight terrorists alongside us.” He made clear that he hopes to use special operations forces in an economy of force, and he hopes to deploy, train, and assist missions across the globe—all as he withdraws our conventional forces and as our conventional warfighting ability atrophies.

As I said, he will leave his successor with a great many challenges.

So this morning my Republican colleagues and I will explain how, by inflexibly clinging to campaign promises made in 2008, the President has weakened the national security posture of the United States and why we believe he is likely to leave the next President with daunting security problems to solve.

Mr. President, I see the Senator from Arizona and others are here.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half of the time.

The Senator from Arizona.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Republicans be allowed an additional 15 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCAIN. I thank the Presiding Officer.

FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today we see reports that now ISIS has taken over the major oil refinery in Baiji, Iraq. Names that we used to hear quite often, such as, Tal Afar, Mosul, Fallujah, Ramadi—all of these areas are now under the black flag of Al Qaeda and ISIS, which is an even worse organization than Al Qaeda, if that can be believed.

We now see the forces of ISIS marching on Baghdad itself, which I don't believe they can take. But the second largest city in Iraq—Mosul—is now under the black flag, and quantities of military capability and equipment have clearly fallen into the hands of what has now become the richest, largest base for terrorism in history. This has all come about in the last couple of weeks.

What has the United States of America done? Today we see on the front page of the Washington Post: “U.S. Sees Risk in Iraqi Airstrikes.” The President of the United States goes for fundraising and golfing and now is fiddling while Iraq burns. We need to act, but we also need to understand why we are where we are today.

The Senator from South Carolina and I visited Iraq on many occasions—more than I can count. We know for a fact that if we would have left a residual force behind, this situation would not be where it is today.

The fact is that the President of the United States, if he wanted to leave a residual force, never made that clear to the American people. In fact, on October 22, 2012, the President said: “What I would not have had done was left 10,000 troops in Iraq that would tie us down.” In 2011 he celebrated the departure—as he described it—of the last combat soldier from Iraq.

The fact is that because of our fecklessness and the fact that we did not leave that residual force behind, we are paying the price, and the people of Iraq are paying a heavier price.

What do we need to do? First of all, we have to understand there are no good options remaining. This is a culmination of failure after failure of this administration. But for us to do nothing now will ensure this base for terrorism. We have tracked over 100 who have already come back to the United States of America. There are hundreds who are leaving—not only the battlefield in Syria and Iraq—and they will pose a direct threat to the security of the United States.

I say to the critics who say “Do nothing and let them fight it out,” you cannot confine this conflict to Iraq and